(4421(3) HITCHIN

HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year ending

DECEMBER 31st, 1 9 4 6

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

Medical Officer of Health:

NORMAN MACFADYEN, M.B., D.P.H., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.

123 Norton Way, Letchworth
(Phone: Letchworth 12)

Senior Sanitary Inspector:

SAMUEL T. GUNNING, Cert. S.I.E.B., F.S.I.A.

Additional Inspector:

ROBERT B. BOLT, Cert. S.I.E.J.B., M.S.I.A.

Council Offices,
21 Bancroft, Hitchin.
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WM. E. POTTER, Clerk to the Council.

HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH for the year ended 31st DECEMBER, 1946

To the Chairman and Members of the Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present this, my thirty-second Annual Report, which is drawn up in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry of Health. It outlines the activities of the department and the general health and sanitary circumstances of your district for the year ended December 31st 1946.

Section A

Statistics and Social Conditions of the District

Area (in acres)	82,559
Residential Population (Registrar- General's figure).	20,710
Number of Assessments	7,012
Rateable Value	£102,068
Sum represented by a penny rate.	£400. 8. 8d.
Number of Parishes in District..	34

The population figures as given by the Registrar-General (mid-year) show an increase of 240 on the year, as an offset against the recorded decrease of 800 last year. Local estimates support a population figure of over 22,000.

Vital Statistics

Births

Legitimate - Male, 177;	Female, 191)	Total, 388
Illegitimate - Male, 13;	Female, 7)	

Birth-rate, 18.7, compared with 19.1 for England and Wales.

Deaths

Male, 125; Female, 109. Total, 234. Death-rate, 11.3

England and Wales " " 11.5

Deaths of Infants under one year

Legitimate - Male, 9; Female, 5)
Illegitimate - Male, 0; Female, 0) Total, 14

Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 births) = 36.0

" " " England and Wales = 43.0

Still Births

Legitimate - Male, 5; Female, 4)
Illegitimate - Male, 0; Female, 0) Total, 9

Still Birth-rate = .43

" " " England and Wales = .59

The principal causes of death were as follows:-

Tuberculosis	5
Malignant Growth	35
Disease of heart and circulation...	100
Disease of pulmonary organs	25
Prematurity and congenital injury or disease..	11
Childbirth (not sepsis)	0
Infantile Diarrhoea	2
Road Traffic	5

There was no maternal death, nor any from the usual infectious diseases.

The whole picture is encouraging; the births are slightly lower than throughout the country generally, but preventible disease is lower than it used to be. The death-rate is that of an ageing population, but more births are required to make the population more than stationary.

Infectious Diseases Notified

Chickenpox	5	
Diphtheria	1	(not confirmed)
Dysentery	2	
Erysipelas	2	
Infective Hepatitis	1	
Measles	73	
Ophthalmic Neonatorum	1	
Pneumonia	7	
Relapsing Fever	1	
Scarlet Fever	17	
Tuberculosis	22	
Whooping Cough	14	
	146	

The Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria cases were treated at the North Herts. Isolation Hospital, which is managed by the North Herts. (Joint) Hospital Board. It is noted with special interest that only one case of diphtheria was notified during the year, and that, on careful examination, was not confirmed.

The vital statistics are healthy. Infectious disease as a cause of death is negligible, and the general health continues good.

School Medical Inspection

During the year under review the whole of the school Medical Inspection work was taken over by a full-time Medical Officer on the County Council Staff. During the years I have been associated with this work it has given me much satisfaction to note the continued improvement in the health, appearance and habits of the school children, and there is little doubt that under the New Education Act this progress will be not only maintained but greatly improved. I say goodbye to this aspect of my work with much regret.

Diphtheria Immunisation

This work is now being carried out by the County Council, and the success obtained by the district nurses in getting so high a percentage of the one-year olds immunised is again an outstanding feature. The number of immunisations carried out during the year is 180.

Section B

General Provision of Health Services

1. Public Health Officials:

(a) Medical

The Medical Officer of Health is a part-time Officer holding a Diploma in Public Health. He is also Medical Officer of Health for Hitchin Urban and Royston Urban Districts; and also Medical Superintendent of the Isolation Hospital.

(b) Sanitary

The Senior Sanitary Inspector holds the Certificate of the Sanitary Inspectors' Examination Board (London) 1920, including the qualification as an Inspector of Meat and other foods.

The Additional Sanitary Inspector holds the Certificate of the Sanitary Inspectors' Examination (Joint) Board.

(c) Clerical - Miss S. Cross (temporary) January to September 1946.
Miss D. M. Bland from October 1946.

Laboratory facilities, Hospital facilities etc.

The arrangements with reference to these services continue as in former years and are satisfactory. The establishment of a Public Health Laboratory at Luton foreshadowed towards the end of the year, should prove of value to the district.

Section C

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Water Supplies

The water supply position in all those parts of the district served by public supplies continues satisfactory. The Chemical and Bacteriological examinations of the sources of these supplies taken during the year show a high standard

of purity. I am not however, satisfied with the number and frequency of the samples, and I particularly stress the need for more frequent sampling of the supplies at points of distribution on the mains. It is therefore with satisfaction that I learn of the Council's decision relative to this matter, which is operative during the current year.

Quantitatively, the Ashwell supply has caused your Engineer & Surveyor some concern, and the proposal to link up with the Hitchin-Braughing scheme is a good one, in that it will make possible a supply for the village of Newnham where the existing supply is not too certain and gives cause for concern.

Other areas giving cause for anxiety apart from scattered farms and more isolated properties are Hexton and Langley, where proposed extensions on the Offley-Lilley scheme will meet an urgent need.

Sewage and Sewerage Disposal

If there is one aspect of the Council's Public Health activities where the shortage of materials and labour is to be deplored more than any other (Housing of course excepted) it is in the matter of the provision of adequate sewers and sewage disposal works.

Schemes on paper submitted for County and Ministerial consideration and schemes in course of preparation cannot be fully appreciated by the ratepayers, who are anxiously waiting for the improved sanitary conditions of which these works are the foundation.

Meanwhile, the maintenance of the existing sewers and sewage disposal works in a workable condition - many of which are old and insufficient in capacity - is causing your Surveyor considerable anxiety.

Public Cleansing Service
Refuse Collection and Disposal of Salvage

Against increasing difficulties in both transport and labour, every effort has been made to maintain the standard of efficiency which it has been my pleasure to record in previous years. Early in the year under review it became apparent that the existing vehicles would have to be replaced if the service was to be maintained and improved. New vehicles were ordered but unfortunately trade conditions make deliveries very uncertain Meanwhile, every effort is being made to maintain a schedule, but it is evident that the regularity of the service can only

be maintained by the provision of more vehicles, or by the reduction of the collection frequency.

The figures for the year under review are as follows:-

Approximate weight collected of all materials - 2977 tons
(against 2568 tons collected the previous year)

Of this amount the following weights were recovered and sold, yielding an income of - £526.18. 5d. -

	Tons.	Cwts.	Qrs.	Lbs.	£ s. d.
Waste Paper	58	11	3	2	384.11.11.
Textiles	4	18	1	5	61.18. 1.
Bones	2	12	3	9	14. 3. 2.
Metals (ferrous & non-ferrous)	50	15	3	18	66. 5. 3.
Totals -	116	18	3	6	£526.18. 5d.

Here there is an increased tonnage but a decreased income, due to alterations in prices of salvaged materials.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area

The figures submitted herewith, compiled from the Sanitary Inspectors' records, show that in spite of increasing administrative duties and the difficulties imposed by Licensing restrictions, much useful work has been carried out particularly in the matter of housing, to which special reference is made in the following section of this report.

It is however, a noticeable fact, worth recording, that an increasing amount of work under Licence has been completed this year. This no doubt is a genuine reflection of the increasing and urgent need to carry out repair and maintenance work if the increasing tempo of dilapidation consequent on war-time restrictions is to be arrested.

The figures supplied are as follows:-

Total number of inspections for all purposes - 5053

Divided as follows:-

For defects under the Housing Acts	2818
For defects under the Factory Acts	28
For the prevention of Infectious Disease	67
As to the Sanitary Condition of Schools & Public Halls	10
Inspections under the Milk & Dairies Order	215
Inspections of slaughter-houses, butchers' shops etc.	56
For the prevention of Nuisances	90
Inspections of drainage, conversions etc.	84
Inspections of water supplies and sampling	19
Supervision of Refuse Collection and Salvage Disposal	437
Inspections re Rats & Mice Destruction	51
Inspections under Shops Act, 1934	22
Miscellaneous Inspections...	121
Interviews	752
Inspections of Moveable Dwellings	19
Food & Drugs Act	264
Total	5053

Section D

Housing

In my last report I expressed the hope that the activities of the Council in the field of Housing would show a good record. It is therefore, gratifying to be able to record that a total of 68 new dwelling houses were completed and occupied -

By the Local Authority -	Permanent, Traditional	- 34)	Total 53
	" Swedish	- 12)	
	Pre-fabricated	- 7)	
By Private Enterprise -	Permanent, Traditional	-	15

The Building Programme which was in full swing at the commencement of 1947, should gain momentum and show an even better result in my next report. It is certainly some source of satisfaction to realise that as a result of the Council's efforts in this direction, at least one family was directly re-housed each week during the year, while indirectly fifty-three other householders benefited, either by the relieving of congestion in existing houses or by smaller cottages from which large families were removed becoming available for suitable occupation.

Meanwhile, the number of applications continues to increase.

A notable feature of the year under review is the progress made with and the information made available as a result of the Rural Housing Survey, which occupied a considerable amount of your Inspectors' time in addition to whole-time service on this work by Mr. H. R. A. Newbold, who was appointed by the Council in a temporary capacity for this purpose.

The system of inspection by which all properties are measured against an approved County Standard and recorded on a Points system will, I am sure, provide a basis for a long term policy of re-conditioning which must of necessity become increasingly important in the near future.

A summary of the inspection to December 31st is as follows:-

No. of houses inspected	Classification 1.	2.	3.	4.
3210	917	1248	809	236
Percentage	28.6	38.8	25.2	7.4

Consequent on these inspections, every effort is being made to get all urgent repairs carried out. Having regard to the limited amount of labour and materials available, your Inspectors' efforts have been confined to making the properties wind and weatherproof and safe, while at all times regard has been paid to possible future sanitary and structural improvements. These of necessity have had to be postponed to a more favourable opportunity.

May I express the hope that it may soon be possible to deal with the question of re-conditioning and sanitary improvement, coupled with a warning that any further undue delay will have serious repercussions on the already gigantic Housing problem. Might I venture to suggest that a house saved is of almost equal importance to a house gained.

I visualise a very busy time ahead for the department responsible for this aspect of re-housing.

Sanitary Improvements

As already stated in the preceding paragraph, sanitary and other improvements have been held in check during the year for reasons which have been duly publicised, but notwithstanding these restrictions, the figures for this aspect of the work are -

Sanitary Improvements, including drainage ... 49
Other improvements and alterations 102

There were no Abatement Notices outstanding at December 31st.

Section E

Inspection and Supervision of Food

Of the 158 Registered Producers and/or Producer-Retailers, 24 are now licensed for the production of Accredited Milk and 30 for the production of Tuberculin Tested Milk. This latter figure shows an increase of 6 producers of this higher grade milk during the year. There are in addition seven persons in the district registered as Retailers only, and twenty-one outside Retailers selling milk in the district.

The standard of milk produced and retailed within the district maintains a fairly satisfactory level. Because much of the milk produced in our area is delivered in bulk to nearby towns and thereby retailed, I have endeavoured throughout the year to get as many reports as possible relating to this work from the Sanitary Inspectors in the districts concerned.

Samples taken include 284 Designated Milks and 47 Non-Designated, the results of which are shown on the table below:-

Designated Milks

No. of samples taken by:-	Results	
	Complied	Failed
a) County Officers	140	16
b) H.R.D.C.	80	16
c) Other Authorities	17	15
	237	47

Total number of Samples of Designated Milks taken - 284

Non-Designated Milks

No. of samples taken by:-	Results Complied	Results Failed
a) County Officers	--	--
b) H.R.D.C.	6	4
c) Other Authorities	10	27
	16	31

The total number of samples of non-designated milk taken from the district was 47, and the standard used was the same as that set for designated milks.

In addition, 9 of the samples of designated milks were examined for the presence of T.B. - 8 were negative and no result was obtained for the remaining sample. Thirty-one samples of non-designated milks were also examined for the presence of tubercule bacilli, 20 of which gave a negative result and the results of the remaining 11 samples were not received.

On and after the 1st June, the County Council took over the sampling of designated and school milks, having appointed Officials for this purpose, and this Authority ceased to act as their sampling agents.

The samples taken by this Council's Officers for the County Council were submitted to the Public Health Laboratories, Cambridge, but after 1st June the samples were submitted to the County Laboratories, Hertford, by their own Officers.

Meat and other Foods

From the figures shown in the table of inspections it will be gathered that the food inspection side of your Sanitary Inspectors' work has received considerable attention. Visits were made to all premises where food is prepared for sale and as far as possible to all premises from which foodstuffs are sold.

The amount of meat and other similar products condemned, as diseased or otherwise unfit for food, was not large, and reflects much credit on the method of selection of animals for slaughter. There is however, one aspect of this matter to which the department's attention was called from time to time during the year - that of transport and handling -

whereby at certain seasons, after many hours' journey in vans-overloaded - meat has been delivered to the retail butchers in such a state as to be in part if not actually unfit for food, at least unsaleable, and it is with some difficulty that your Inspectors have to decide on the quantity to be rejected for sale and returned to the Depot for replacement.

This matter is, I understand, receiving serious attention by the various Authorities concerned, and is one, I submit, of considerable importance.

There is a noticeable improvement in the manner in which foodstuffs, including sweets, are now kept and handled in the small shops throughout the district.

Clinical examination of milk and other foodstuff and sampling under the Food & Drugs Act are carried out by the County Council.

Food Condemned	Cwts.	Qrs.	Lbs.	Ozs.
Tinned foods, including meats and fish		2	15	7
Fruit and Vegetables			24	12
Flour		2	-	-
Fish		2	14	-
Meat	1	-	27	-
Total weight -	3	1	25	3

In addition, 13 lbs of tinned milk were condemned as unsaleable by reason of bad packing and labelling, and were salvaged.

Shops Act 1934

There are about 190 shops in the district which come under the provisions of the Shops Act, and an effort has been made to visit as many as possible in regard to matters referred to in the Act.

Factories Act.

A fuller report on the operation of the Factories Act is called for in my next report, with a return to the pre-war system of a separate report.

All notices referred to this Council from H.M. Inspector of Factories received immediate attention, and the work called for carried out at times after considerable delay.

uberculosis Regulations

Table of New Cases and Mortality for the year.

Age Periods.	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory.		Non-Respiratory.		Respiratory.		Non-Respirato	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0- 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1- 5	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
5-15	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
15-25	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
25-35	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
35-45	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
45-55	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
55-65	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
and over	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	4	3	2	3	2	1	-	1

The above figures show 12 new cases of Tuberculosis reported uring the year under review, as against 24 for the year 1945. One atient suffering from Tuberculosis was reported cured.

Conclusion

I wish to place on record again my sincere appreciation of the team spirit which prevails in all departments of the Council, whereby co-operative action makes pleasureable a task, the magnitude of which might otherwise be, to say the least, very difficult.

Such co-operation is possible only by the self-sacrificing efforts of the members of the Council, whose interest in the health and environmental condition of the inhabitants of this Rural District is the driving force behind all efforts.

To my Colleagues and to the Members of the Council my best thanks for continued and valued assistance.

Your obedient servant,

11. 7.47

Medical Officer of Health